

Special Edition: Edgefield County Council Chairman's State of the County Report January 10, 2013

This special edition of the Edgefield County Chairman's Update is a State of the County report to you. I committed to you that I would continue to communicate the County's activities to you. This report seeks to do just that.

First, nothing the County does is possible without the work of many people. From the County Council side, I'd like to thank Vice Chair Genia Blackwell, Rodney Ashcraft, Willie Bright (who was replaced by Betty Butler this month), and Norman Dorn. We also owe a debt of gratitude for the County Staff, Department Heads, Elected Officials, and our many volunteers who serve on Committees and Boards, all of whom help us move Edgefield County smartly into the future.

Make no mistake about it: We are moving in the right direction!

This report only contains highlights; there are many other achievements I'm pleased we were able to accomplish as a team. If you'd like to see them all, I encourage you to go to the County website and read through the minutes for each meeting this year. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Many of the items you'll see below stem from the Strategic Plan, approved by County Council in 2012. This Plan represents a new, bold step to begin laying the groundwork for Edgefield County's future growth. To create this Plan, we had great citizen and stakeholder participation in the process from all parts of the County. The Strategic Plan was not only passed last year, but also revised during the year.

While Edgefield County is putting into place many new policies, programs and actions to make our County one of South Carolina's best, we are also growing in many ways – the obvious example is in economic development.

Edgefield County had two industrial announcements in 2012 by companies that have been in the County for many years, Bondex and US Fibers. Bondex is investing \$6.4 million and creating 13 new full-time jobs. U.S. Fibers is investing \$5.5 million and creating 48 new jobs.

This \$12 million of new investment and 61 new jobs represents one of the best years in economic development Edgefield County has had in several years.

In addition, the County Council and Edgefield County Water and Sewer Authority signed an agreement last year that would allow for a joint sewer line in the Merriwether area in anticipation of coming residential growth. Taking this step opens the door to bring much needed planned growth to our County.

Another highlight last year was the County Council agreeing to a \$4 million Capital Improvement Plan. This Plan, a first for the County, is significant since it sets the stage for the future large-dollar expenditures needed in the County for the next five years.

The County Council also approved last year accepting approximately 4 acres of property along with the Sweetwater Community Center near Cooper Place subdivision. The property was donated by property trustees Lois Morgan and Buck Bell at the request of Ambassador and Mrs. Cooper. This land and

building could be used for multiple purposes in the future. It's a wonderful gift and opportunity for our County!

In the land use area, County Council gave final reading to a Highway Access Plan. This Plan establishes standards for the number, location, design, construction, and maintenance of driveways, acceleration/deceleration lanes, and inter-parcel connections in Edgefield County in order to improve highway safety in the County. This new "access management" will only apply to new developments and renovations or expansions that exceed 50 percent of the appraised value of the development.

We believe this plan is a good step toward making roadways safer by reducing the number of driveways on to main roads.

Also, the County Council decided to terminate the lease at Northside Park, a taxpayer-supported park. The five-year history of this Park is long, detailed, full of stops and starts for the County, and not very productive for the Northside area or the County in general.

We haven't abandoned the residents of Northside, nor any other part of the County. I am in hopes that the County Council can find a more suitable location for a park or parks in the future. In the meantime, the former Northside Park land is back in the hands of the community.

Some other highlights that are significant and worth noting:

- The County Council saw our new Administrator, Lynn Strom, begin her work;
- There were no tax increases last year;
- The County Council had its first listening tour across the county;
- Building permits for homes and additions during 2012 was over \$21 million, compared to only \$14.6 million in 2011;
- An action agenda with the County Council and Planning Commission was created, another first for the County;
- The County got a new, very user-friendly website;
- The County Council took several "field trips" to other governmental entities to share ideas;
- The County upgraded the E911 system, which had become obsolete;
- Thanks mostly to grant money, the County was able to narrow band all emergency radios, a requirement by the FCC at little cost of taxpayers; and
- Provided two new ambulances to EMS and upgraded their equipment.

There's still more left to do, of course, from getting the animal shelter built to bringing more recreation to citizens to looking at ways to allow continued, controlled growth of business and industry without impacting neighborhoods and the great quality of life in Edgefield County.

I hope it is obvious to you that County Government is looking directly at the future of our County and its citizens. We make every decision with citizens in mind. Please let County Council or County Government staff know your opinion on any issue. Together, we can become South Carolina's best place to live and work.

Until next time,

Dean Campbell

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How This Update Works

As Chairman of Edgefield County Council, I use this newsletter to help explain County issues and try to answer questions from citizens. We will protect the email addresses of those who are interested in receiving this newsletter.

I'd like to send this newsletter to you at least monthly, depending on issues upcoming or ongoing, or if issues need more explanation.

Finally, if you have a question about an issue, please reply to me. I'll be happy to try to answer your question.